

# Analytical Chemistry Laboratory Employees Recognized for Assistance During Cerro Grande Fire

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) recognized eight chemists in the DOE Grand Junction Office (GJO) Analytical Chemistry Laboratory for their assistance during the Cerro Grande Fire that raged through the Los Alamos, New Mexico, area in May 2000.

Dr. Ron Chessmore, manager of the DOE–GJO Analytical Chemistry Laboratory, received an urgent request from LANL for assistance in analyzing air samples collected from locations directly downwind of the fire. The samples represented those areas that received the heaviest amounts of smoke and ash. Air samples were also collected from two areas upwind of the fire.

“The GJO Laboratory was extremely responsive to our needs,” said Dr. Ernie Gladney of LANL. “We needed quick analyses of the samples to respond to public concerns about any possible release of radioactive material.” The samples were sent to the GJO Analytical Chemistry Laboratory because of its proven ability to provide quality analytical services rapidly.

Scientists at LANL released the results of GJO’s analyses of samples for radioactive materials. Results indicated that smoke and ash did not deposit significant amounts of radioactive contaminants onto surrounding areas. None of the post-fire contaminant levels presented an increased health risk to the public.

In October 2000, Dr. Gladney presented certificates of appreciation from LANL to Dr. Chessmore, Gretchen Baer, Sue Ball, Laura Davis, Steve Donovan, Sue Lopata, Ralph Smith, and Brian Thompson for conducting the analyses. *WASTREN, Inc.*, contractor to DOE–GJO, operates the GJO Analytical Chemistry Laboratory.

At the time of the analyses, the GJO Analytical Chemistry Laboratory was still preparing to be privatized. “In a time of uncertain future for the GJO laboratory, these employees really took the initiative and provided timely and quality assistance to another DOE site,” said Larry Arnold, DOE–GJO Project Manager. “This kind of responsiveness speaks highly of these qualified, dedicated individuals.”❖